

Baumgartner Creamery
U. S. Highway 45
Village of Frankfort
Will County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1160

HABS
ILL,
99-FRAFO,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

Baumgartner Creamery
HABS No. 1L 1160
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
BAUMGARTNER CREAMERY

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Along the east side of U. S. Route 45, about 200 feet north of Hickory Creek, Village of Frankfort, Will County, Illinois

Quad: Tinley Park

UTM: 16/4596770/429115

Date of Construction: 1875

Present Owners: State of Illinois Mr. Edward Gee
c/o Illinois Department of Transportation Orland Park, Illinois
Springfield, Illinois

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Baumgartner Creamery is the last known 19th century cheese factory building still standing in Will County, Illinois, and one of the few left in that state. It is a representative and relatively intact element of 19th century commercial agricultural development in the upper Midwest.

Historians: Glenn P. Coburn, Frankfort Township Supervisor, July 1979; Michael Ward, Illinois Department of Conservation, May 1980, and Michael Lambert, Corsetti-Lambert, September 1990

11. HISTORY

A. SETTLEMENT OF FRANKFORT & EARLY CHEESE FACTORIES IN WILL COUNTY

The Baumgartner Creamery, which is known historically as the Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory, is located approximately two miles north of the original Village of Frankfort, in Frankfort Township in northeastern Will County (see map on page 12 of 21).

Named after Frankfort-Am-Main, Germany, Frankfort Township was settled beginning in 1834. Many of the early settlers to this part of the county were of German or Swiss ancestry. By 1870, approximately nineteen hundred inhabitants lived in the thirty-six square mile township. The primary occupation in the area was crop farming. Primarily corn, wheat, oat, rye and flax were the staple crops, although extensive grape vineyards were well-established.

Although butter and cheese had traditionally been products of individual farms, cooperative cheese factories were established in the 1850's in the eastern United States. By the late 1860's cheese factories began appearing in Illinois. Although commonly called "creameries" in recent years, these operations were known as "cheese factories" during their heyday.

An 1873 Will County atlas indicates only two established cheese

factories in the entire 845 square mile county. These cheese factories were located in the northwest quadrangle of Section 11, DuPage Township, and in the southeast quadrangle of Section 3 in Frankfort Township. The 1873 Frankfort Township cheese factory was located a short distance from the 1875 Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory on land owned by one of the Baumgartner Company stockholders, suggesting the 1873 factory may have been the predecessor of the Baumgartner operation. By 1878, numerous cheese factories had been established throughout Will County, primarily in the northern townships. Agricultural records for the year 1877-78 in Will County indicate the following:

Number of Cows Kept	17,366
Pounds of Butter Sold	787,012
Pounds of Cheese Sold	57,860
Gallons of Cream Sold	10,060
Gallons of Milk Sold	1,322,646

Of these quantities the following sales were recorded for Frankfort Township, where the Baumgartner factory was in operation:

Numbers of Cows Kept	835
Pounds of Butter Sold	25,780
Pounds of Cheese Sold	4,000
Gallons of Milk Sold	185,150

Towns such as Joliet, Lockport and Plainfield each had cheese factories within their municipal boundaries after 1865.

An 1878 historical perspective noted that in DuPage Township:

The dairy business received considerable attention in this town. The quantity of milk produced is perhaps, greater than in any other township of the county. Besides the amount consumed at the two factories, a great deal is shipped to Chicago from Romeo Station, just on the line between Lockport and DuPage, which is said to be one of the best milk stations on the Chicago & Alton Railroad. The oldest cheese factory in the town is the one near Barber's Corners. It was built originally at Lemont by a man named Hess, from Plainfield. A company was organized at Barber's Corners about 1870, who bought the factory and moved it from Lemont to its present location. Last Spring, it was bought by S. R. Richardson, and has cost him about \$2,000. It is a frame building with a brick basement, and its arrangements for cheese-making are complete in every detail. He makes up the milk of his patrons on shares,

and is, at the present time, making, upon an average, eight cheeses per day, with a constantly increasing business. The factory of Sylvester Ward was built at Sprague's Corners in the Spring of 1877, and is a large and commodious establishment. It is a substantial frame with stone basement, and cost \$3,000. It is being operated by Hannibal Ward, a brother of the owner, who is said to be an experienced cheese-maker. They have hitherto been making up the milk on shares for their patrons, but have recently commenced buying milk, and also manufacturing at a certain compensation.

On August 5, 1878, the Conrad & Son Cheese Factory was established one-half mile west of Peotone in a structure which cost four thousand dollars. The Conrad & Son factory consumed two thousand pounds of milk each day and expected to consume fourteen thousand pounds of milk each day "in a short time".

Also during this period a fifty-six feet by thirty-six feet, two-story limestone creamery was erected in Wheatland Township by a Mr. Hyland (Highland) and Asa Mather. By 1910, a second creamery was in operation one mile from the Mather Creamery. Although enough milk may seemed to have been available to justify two creameries, the Mather Creamery closed shortly after 1910 for lack of milk to process.

B. BAUMGARTNER CHEESE FACTORY

The Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory, erected in 1875, was an impressive building in comparison to what we know of the other Will County operations. Owned by a stock company consisting of John and Jacob Baumgartner, George Geuther, Francis Maue and E. Higgins, the two-story brick factory with a limestone basement cost six thousand dollars to construct. The operation itself yielded approximately ten thousand dollars in sales annually. The Baumgartner & Co. factory closed in 1895. The closing was prompted by several factors. First, the quality of the Baumgartner product declined following a pay dispute with the operator, a Mr. Gullickson. Secondly, the factory had been unable to reach full production capacity because milk could not be obtained in great enough quantities. Finally, the increasing demand for fluid milk in urban areas combined with the coming of the railroad yielded a more profitable outlet for dairy farmers who could ship the milk to better-paying markets via rail.

By 1915, it seems, all the local cheese factory/creamery operations in Will County had ceased. Since that time, all of the known Will County factory buildings have been razed with the exception of the Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory. Prior to May 1989, the Mather Creamery in Wheatland Township still was standing.

The Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory consisted of a thirty-three feet by sixty-five feet masonry building, oriented north-south, with a one-story masonry and frame addition to the east. The first floor (lower level) is constructed of coursed limestone while the second floor (upper level) is of red brick laid in a common bond pattern (see photos 1 through 4 and pages 13 through 18 of 21.)

The masonry bearing wall structure utilizes an interior post and beam timber structure supporting the gable roof (see photo 7 and page 21 of 21.) The roof, with two slopes of equal pitch, was sheathed in sawn wood shingles. Window openings with brick segmental relieving arches and wooden sills are placed in a fairly regular and symmetrical pattern at both floors and, originally, contained wooden, double-hung, multi-lite windows (see photos 1 through 4 and 6 and pages 15 through 21). A single circular opening (which may have been either a window or ventilator) is located in the center of each north and south gable (see photos 1 through 4 and pages 16 and 17 of 21). A wagon entrance is located at the southeast corner of the structure (see photo 4 and page 16 of 21).

The interior contains two floors, each with one room (see photos 5 and 7 and pages 20 and 21). The second floor

with original wood flooring, is accessed by a wooden stairway. The wood rafters support racks which had been used for aging cheese (see photo 7 and page 21 of 21).

Over time, the east addition has been removed, the roof sheathed with asphalt shingles, and many windows have been boarded over. Prior to 1980, the north addition, reportedly an ice storeroom, was removed (see pages 15 and 17 of 21).

Little documentation exists about the actual operation of the Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory. However, in general, cheese factories were of similar layout. The ground floor (which was often partially below grade and, therefore, naturally cool) contained milk vats, presses and other cheese-making equipment. The second floor contained the dry room and curing area used for aging the cheese.

However, we can deduce some further information about the Baumgartner factory from the recollections about the Mather Creamery (recorded in 1961 by Mrs. Roberta Patterson, whose father erected the Wheatland Township creamery).

She wrote that milk was brought to the creamery by area farmers who dumped the milk into a big wooden tank outside of the building. From there, the milk ran into large, in-ground vats inside the building.

Then, the milk ran into large milk "cans" without covers, known as "setters". Prior to the creamery being able to afford a separator, the milk was skimmed by hand. Cream was used to make butter; milk was processed into cheese. The whey (or "refuge") ran off into another vat from which it was collected by area farmers for use as "pig slop". The cheese and butter produced at the Mather Creamery was taken to its destination in twenty pound, wooden pails known as "ferkins".

The Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory building stands as the last known structure of this type in Will County. Undoubtedly, few such extant structures remain in Illinois and, quite possibly, the nation, since many of these buildings were located near road intersections and would be within present-day right-of-way easements. The Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory building is a representative element of nineteenth century commercial development of the upper Midwest. For its original industrial function and subsequent use as a garage and storage shed, the Baumgartner & Co. Cheese Factory stands remarkably intact.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has agreed with the Federal Highway Administration, U. S. Department of Transportation, that no feasible and prudent alternative exists to removal of the Baumgartner

Creamery from its historic location to accommodate a proposed widening of U. S. Route 45. Under the terms of a memorandum of agreement between those two agencies, arrangements are being completed to move the building to a nearby property with the approval of the State Historic Preservation Officer.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

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Thompson Bros. & Burr's, Atlas of Will County, Illinois, 1873.

B. NEWSPAPERS

Frankfort-Mokena Star Herald, March 18, 1979.

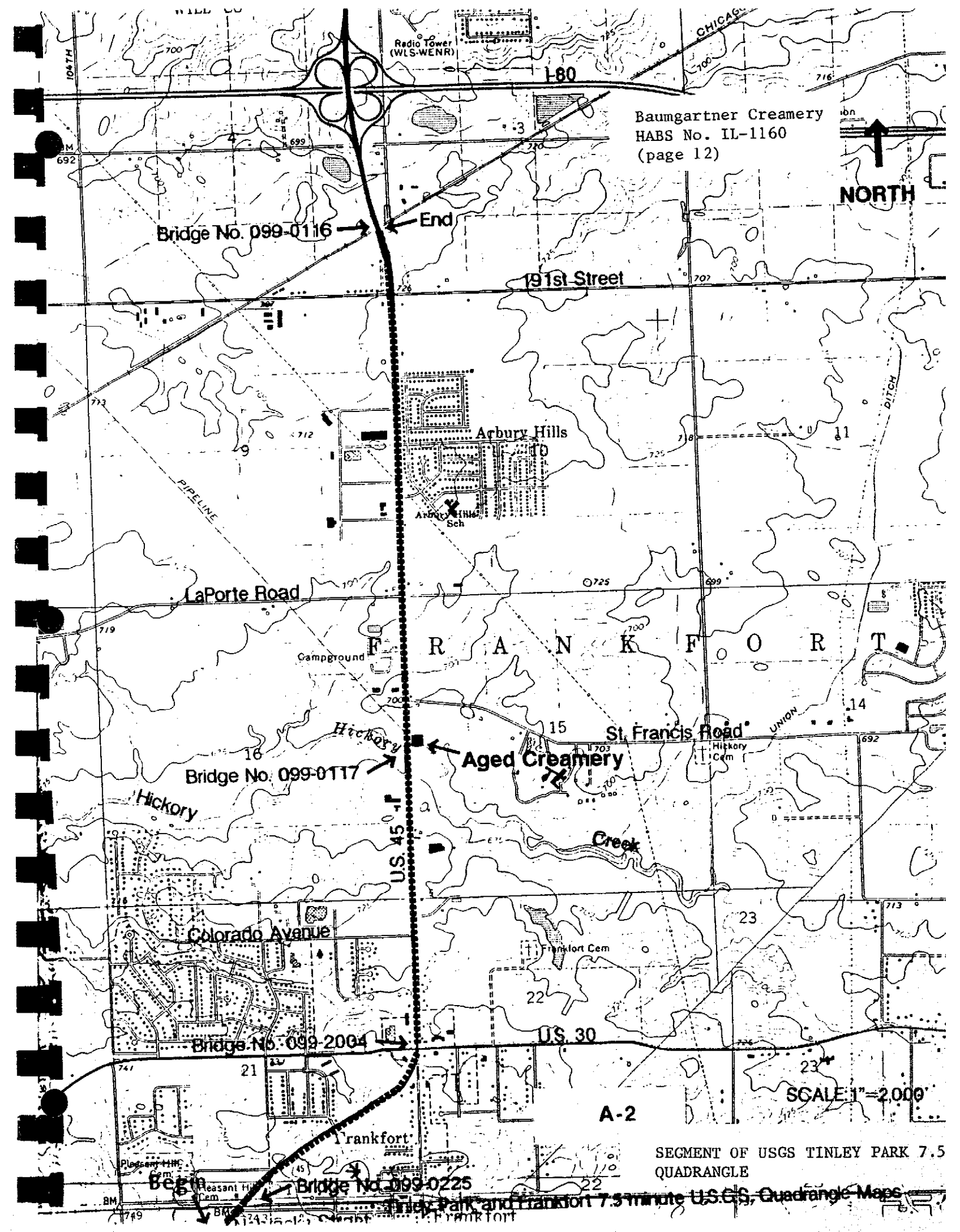
C. INTERVIEWS

Eisenbrandt, Harlan, Frankfort, Illinois, January 1979.

Geuther, Grant B., Frankfort, Illinois, January, 1979.

D. OTHER

Patterson, Roberta Mather, unpublished notes; personal collections of
Francis Patterson, Plainfield, Illinois.



Radio Tower (WLS-WENR)

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Bridge No. 099-0116

End

191st Street

Arbury Hills

LaPorte Road

F R A N K F O R T

Campground

Bridge No. 099-0117

Aged Creamery

St. Francis Road

Hickory

Creek

Colorado Avenue

Bridge No. 099-2004

US 30

Begin

Bridge No. 099-0225

A-2

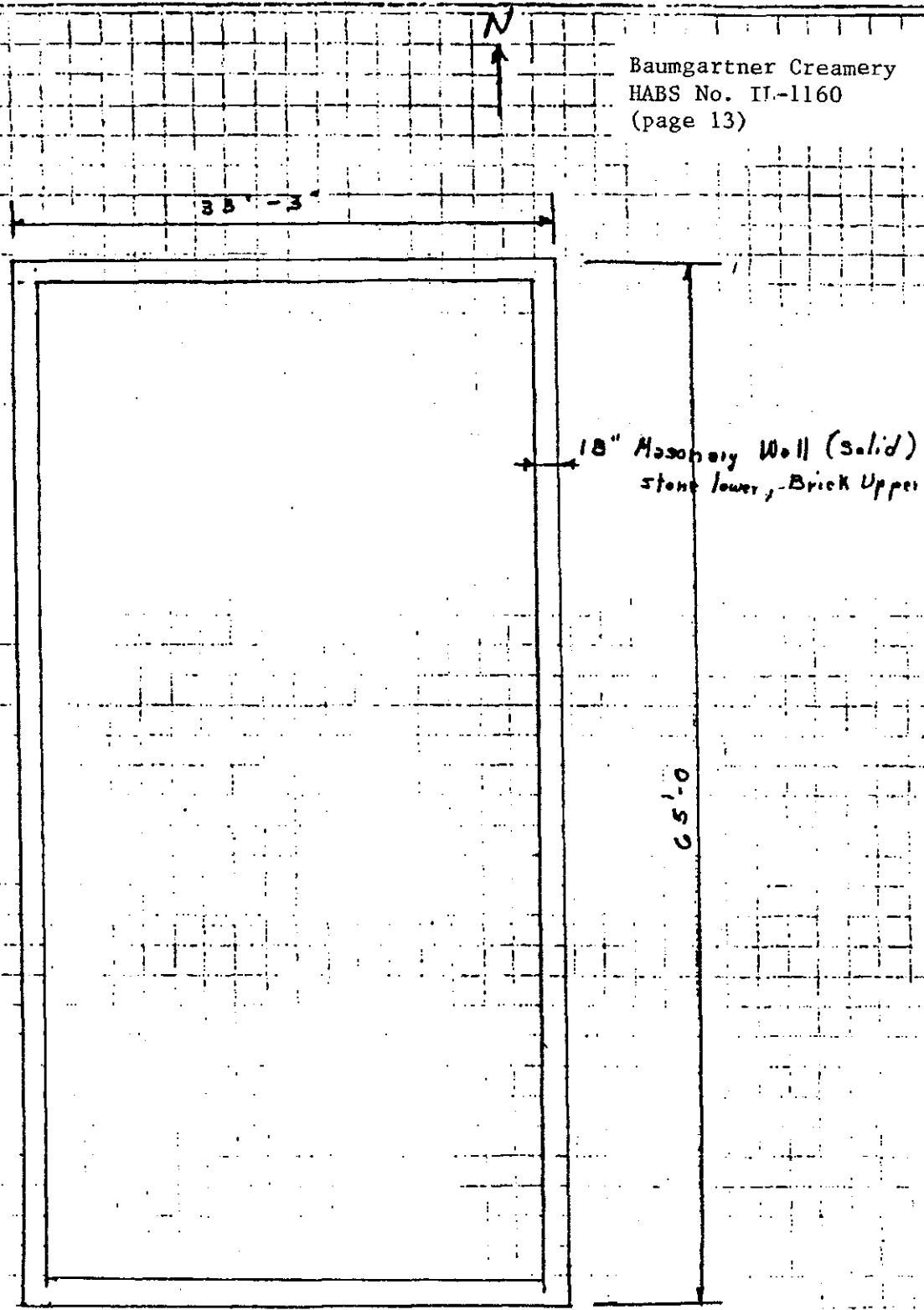
SCALE 1"=2,000'

SEGMENT OF USGS TINLEY PARK 7.5 QUADRANGLE

Frankfort and Frankfort 7.5 minute U.S.G.S. Quadrangle Maps

JOB US. 45 Creamery ~ North of Frankfort
 ITEM PLAN VIEW (Inspect 6/8/89)

DES. W. P. W. DATE 6/10/89
 CK. DATE



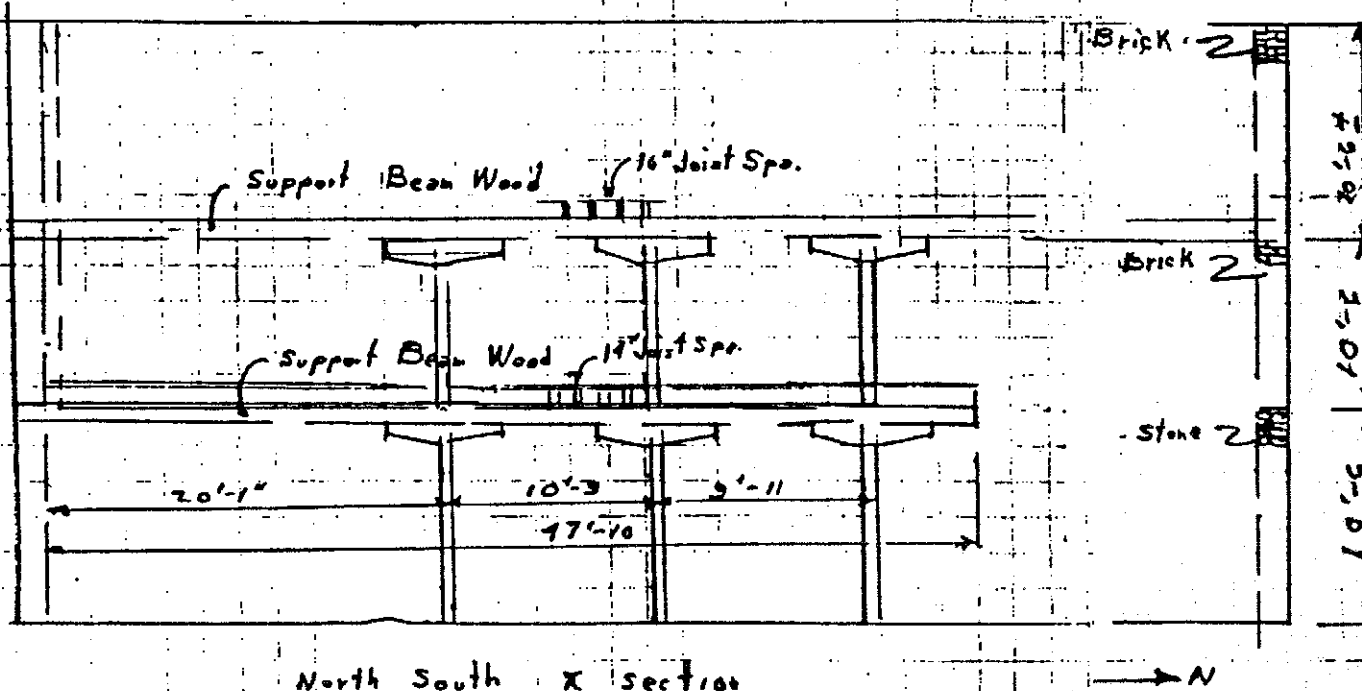
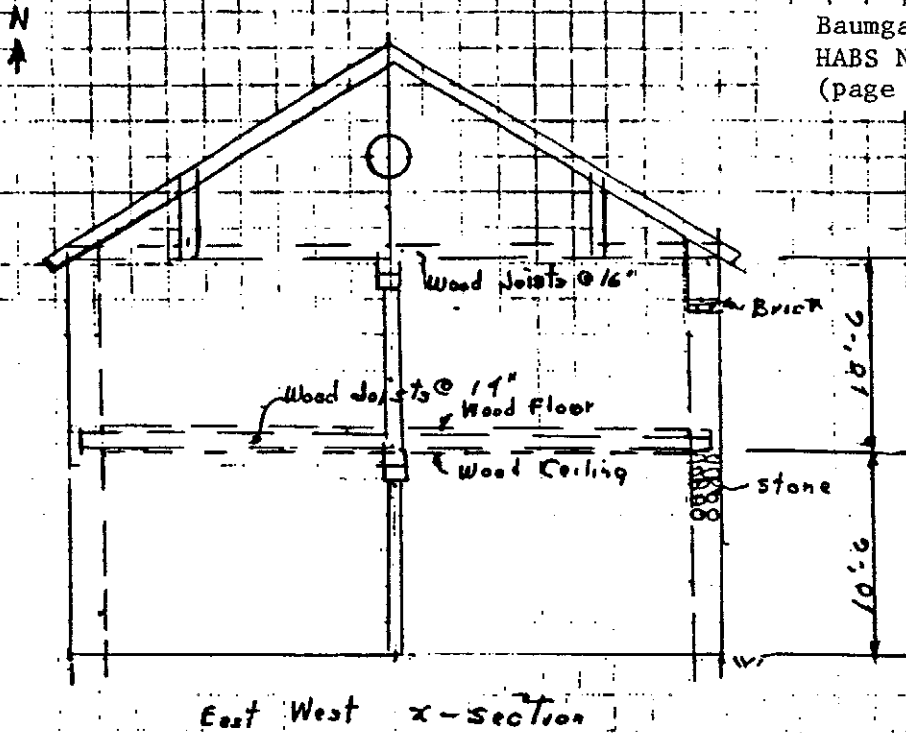
Xerox of measured drawing (1989, original drawing in possession of Beam, Longest & Neff, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana). PLAN

B-4

JOB U.S. 45 Creamery ~ North of Frankfort
ITEM x-section thru Bldg. (Inspect 6/8/83)

DES. W. F. B DATE 6/13/83
CK. DATE

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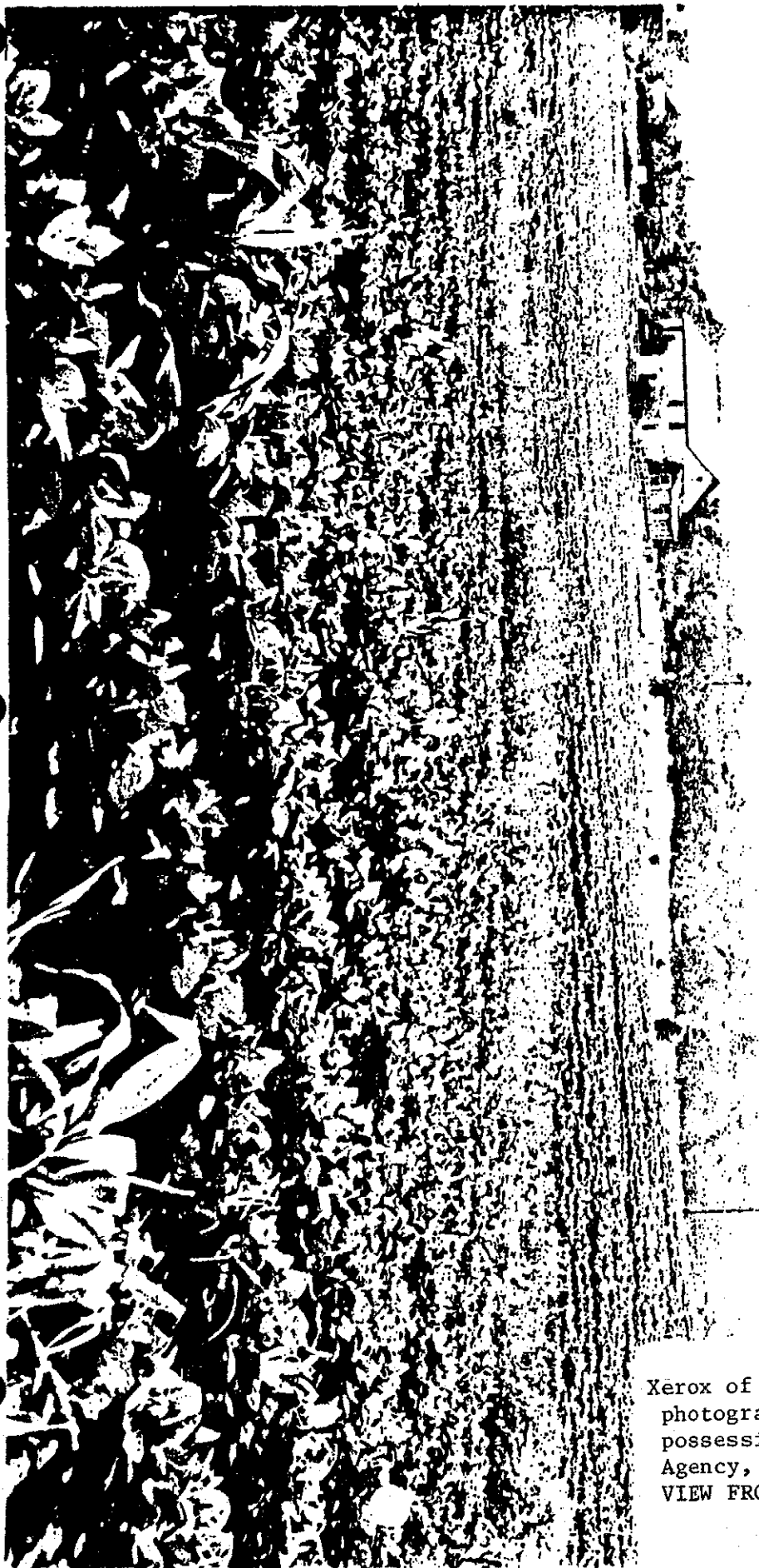


Xerox of measured drawings (1989, original drawings in possession of Beam, Longest & Neff, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana).
EAST-WEST AND NORTH-SOUTH CROSS-SECTIONS

B-5

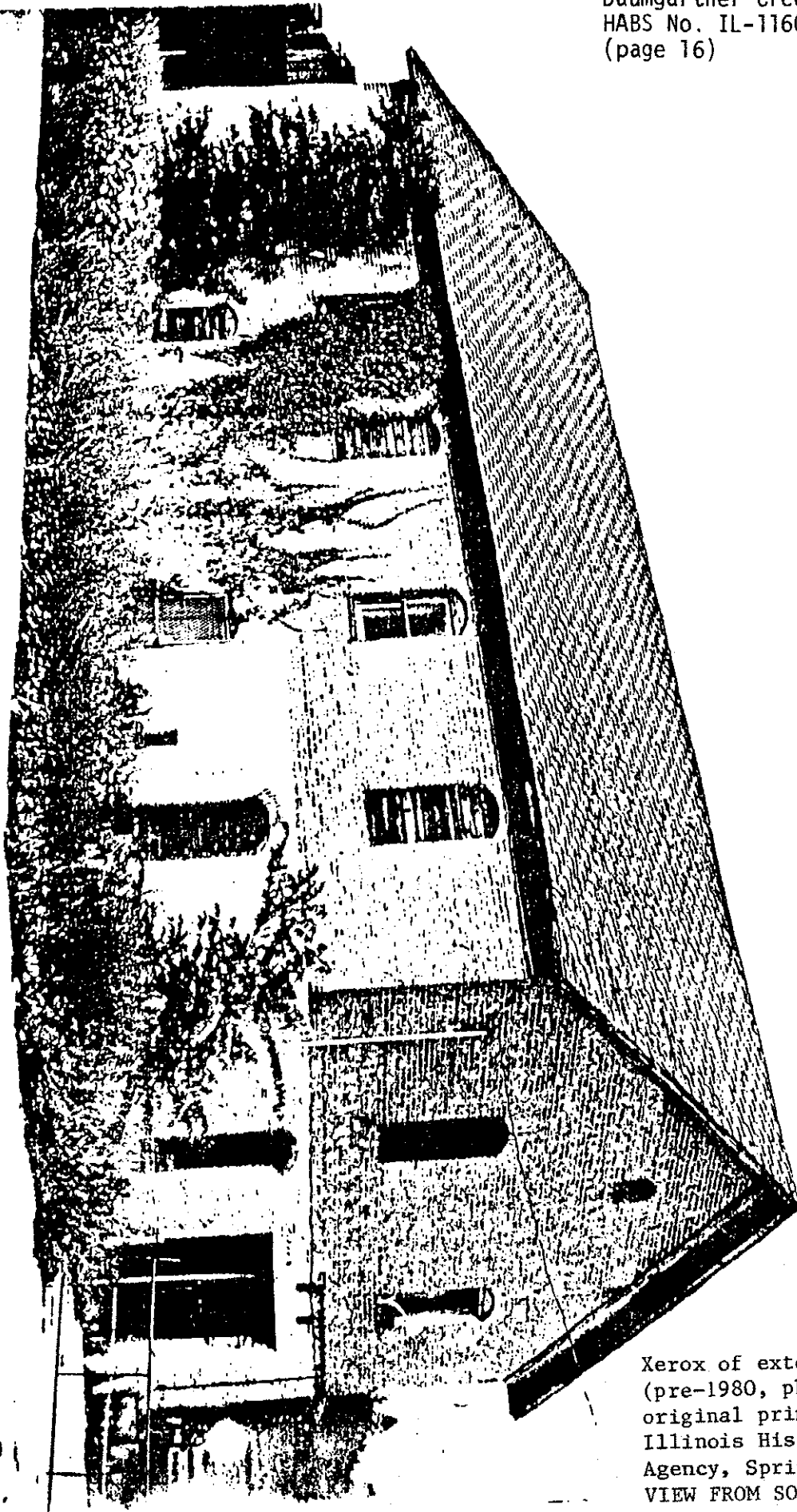
EXHIBIT "B" (Page 2)

Baumgartner Creamery
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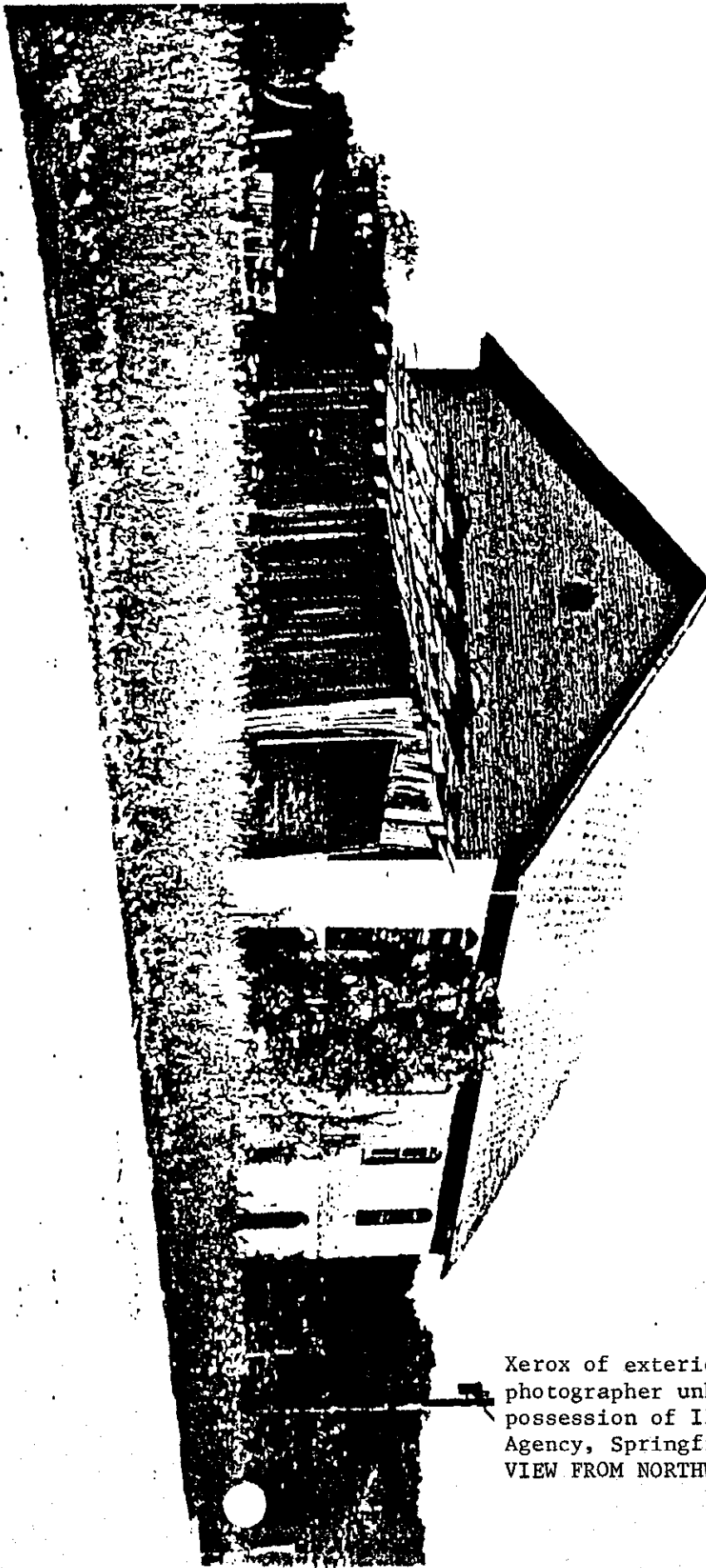
Xerox of exterior photograph (pre-1980,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
VIEW FROM NORTHEAST

Baumgartner Creamery
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(page 16)

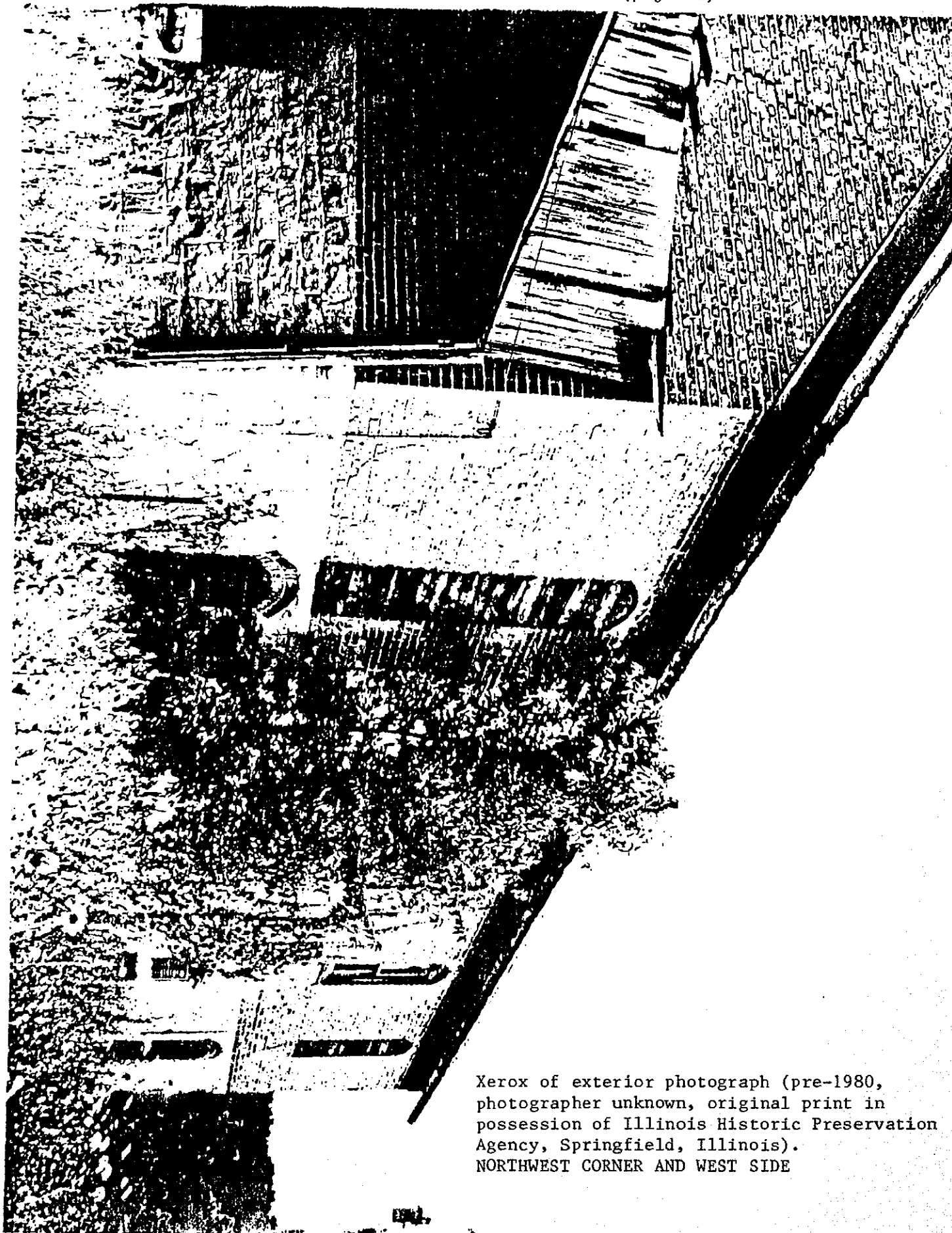


Xerox of exterior photograph
(pre-1980, photographer unknown)
original print in possession of
Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois
VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

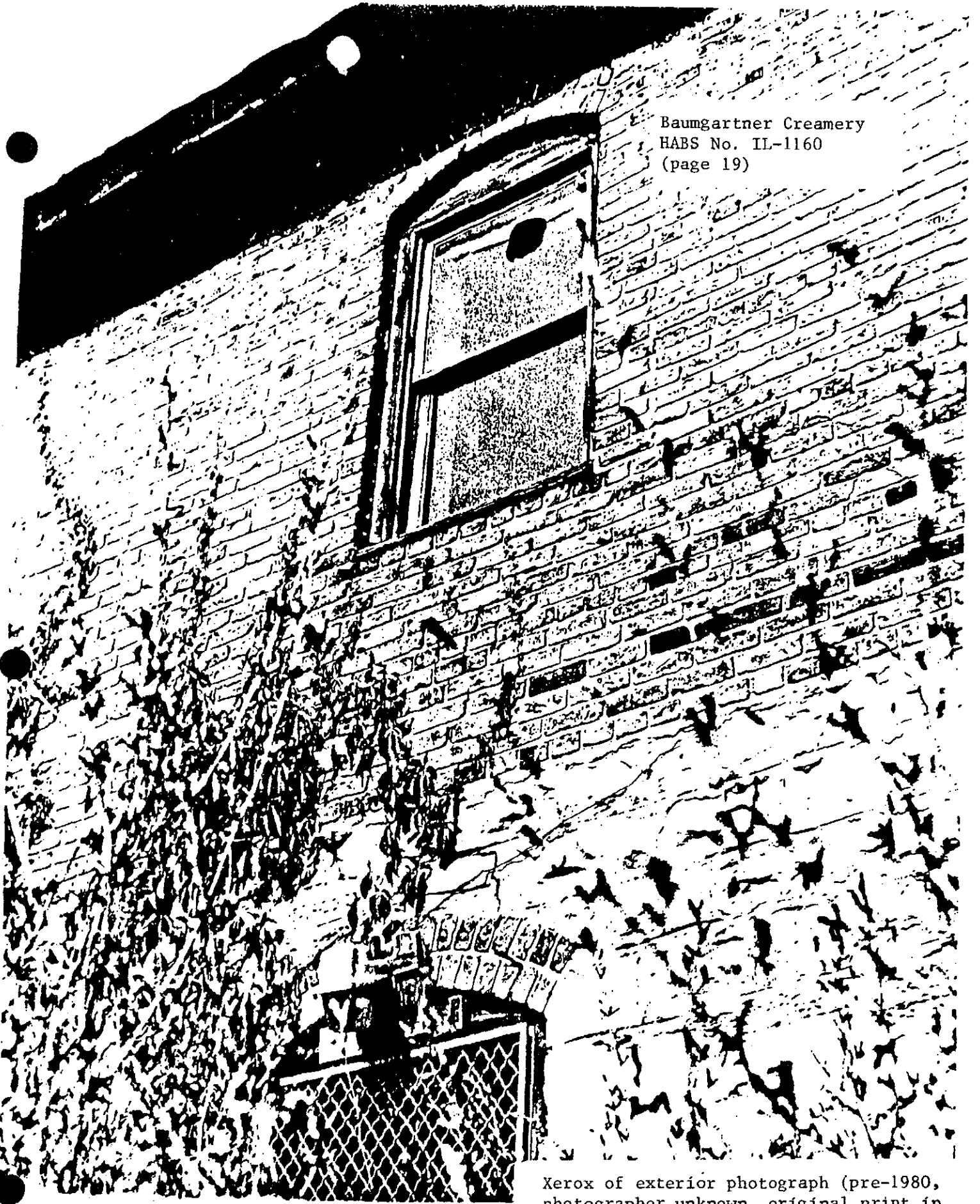
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(page 17)



Xerox of exterior photograph (pre-1980,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
VIEW FROM NORTHWEST



Xerox of exterior photograph (pre-1980,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
NORTHWEST CORNER AND WEST SIDE



Baumgartner Creamery
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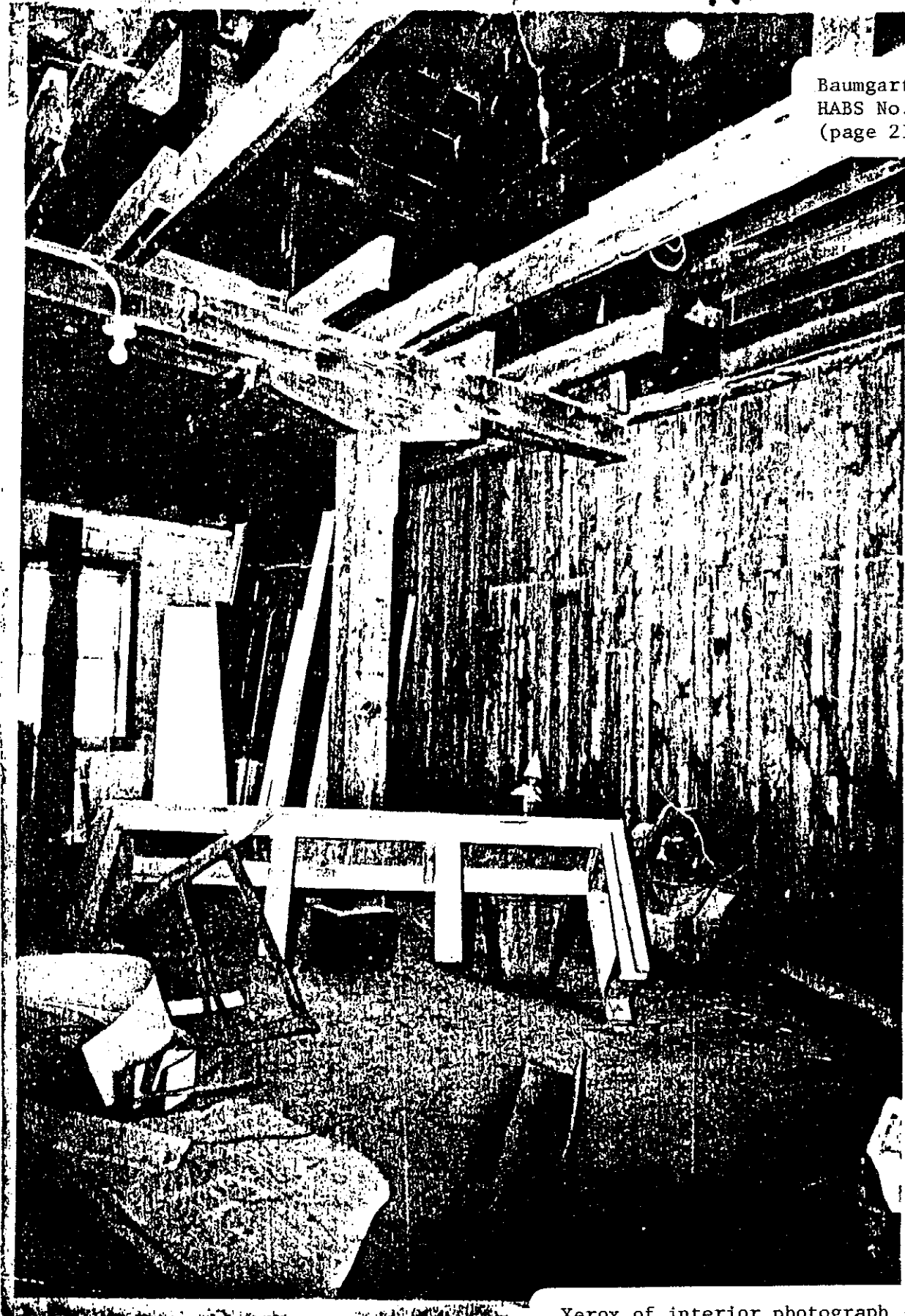
Xerox of exterior photograph (pre-1980,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
DETAIL OF WEST SIDE, SHOWING WINDOWS



Xerox of interior photograph (1979,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservatio
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
LOWER LEVEL

30-190

490



Xerox of interior photograph (1979,
photographer unknown, original print in
possession of Illinois Historic Preservation
Agency, Springfield, Illinois).
UPPER LEVEL